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AN INVENTORY

BY WINIFRED KIRKLAND

THE psychologist of these heavy days learns a new respect for human nature as he observes its adjustment to abnormal conditions. In the stress and strain of an embattled planet, it contributes as much to knowledge of the universal human heart to examine the spirit of a nation not at war as to analyse the attitude of any belligerent, and in the dizzying contemplation of world-minds and war-minds, the mind of the individual home-keeping and peace-keeping American provides a neglected but absorbing study. Every intelligent American is a different person from the self of a year ago. As if each of us were some petty tradesman of the war zone, forced to continue business under bombardment, every thinking man and woman of us is taking an inventory of spiritual resources. Spontaneously our mental business has obeyed an impulse common, but not co-operative. This distinction in itself implies a new era, for hitherto the mental activities of the average American have been a combination of co-operation and of copying.

The first fact we face in our self-study is the discontinuance of our old supplies. Not only too impatient to manufacture our own dye stuffs and chemicals, we have been even more dependent on Europe in matters of intellect. We have shipped our gifted youth to the Continent in order that their raw energies might be converted into the finished product of singer, sculptor, or scholar. This dependence on trans-Atlantic mentality to give the needed metamorphosis to our own has ceased. All Europe's mental output is devoted to its own death-struggle. American intellectual life must still go on, but for its nutriment it must depend either upon the stores we have already accumulated from the other side, or upon our own inventions.

We have not yet fully accepted the fact that this condi-

tion is not transient, whatever be the issue of the world-conflict. We long for peace, but which of us has the courage to face the aspects of that peace?—the harvest of international hate, the severance of commercial and cultural relations between countries, internal revolutions, lands denuded of resources, material and human. Small chance that any of the nations will ever again become our gentle Old-World teachers! It will take perhaps a century of calm before Europe will be able to respond in artistic creation to the emotional demands of the present holocaust. For at least three generations we Americans shall be forced to do our own thinking. By the end of that time the habit may have become ineradicably established. Already there is an agreeable stimulus in the prospect.

Because we have taken all without selection or criticism, we have now in our keeping all that the Old World has had to bestow. This very humility of uncritical acceptance may bear fruit of independence if we will now by process of selection manufacture out of our foreign importation a national possession.

There is, however, a more profound reason that will compel us hereafter to be our own artists and thinkers; our masters have shattered our trust. Because we cannot morally sever conduct from culture, we cannot mentally sever culture from conduct. Moreover we have learned from Germany herself in the past an honesty of thinking that itself perceives Germany's inconsistencies in the present. Just here we who are endeavoring to be steadfast keepers of our spirits must administer to ourselves a caution: among all our stores Germany has contributed perhaps those most sacred for the uses of peace; the fact that we deery her death-dealing militarism should not make us reject the former inestimable benefits she has given to every thinker and student. This admonition implies the hardest of our war-time adjustments, for the bitterest severance of our old self from the new is in the fact that never again can we trust Germany for inspiration. Believing that art and intellect depend for all vital development on a reverence for human life as such, I could never again accept university instruction from a man who believed in the glory of war. A man has killed too many beautiful things in his own soul before he has learned how to murder efficiently. The destruction of Belgium, of the *Lusitania*, will never equal the injury that

the Germany of battle has done to the Germany of our hearts. Just as we condemn Germany for her efficiency, so we shall distrust those other Powers who have needed to learn still greater efficiency to conquer Germany's. So long as we Americans believe that the moral injury of war is deadliest for the nations who most successfully practice it, we cannot in the future accept with our old uncritical docility even purely intellectual inspiration from any of our former European teachers. Our test is soundly moral and pragmatic,—if thus your thinking *acts*, let us do our own.

It assists our self-reliance thus to discover that we must for a long time have been depending entirely on home-made morals. For longer than we have dreamed our consciences have been strictly American, but in respect to intellectual and artistic independence we are still hesitant to manage our business without assistance from foreign sources. It is high time we perceived that we possess the foundations of a culture more sound and virile than that of any nation at whose feet we have sat. When we consider what representatives of manhood we can already point to, Hawthorne, Whitman, Sargent, MacDowell, Edison, why should America be any longer humble in matters of mind? National culture needs two things, appreciation of others' attainments and faith in one's own. We have already proved the first by a catholic indiscrimination that has taught us sympathy with every form of human endeavor; why not prove the second by a manly self-dependence that shall produce yet greater Americans in music, art, literature, and science?

There seems small fear that as we enter upon our national inheritance of culture, any new pride should swallow up our former sincerity of appreciation. It is our special duty to preserve this, since by holding our breadth of sympathy for ourselves, we shall hold it for others as well. We owe our elder brothers, severed by unreasoning hate, an American criticism, broad-minded and healthy, which shall introduce to each other the members of that international brotherhood of poets and thinkers still to be born from the unguessed future.

The chief comfort of this inventory of our resources is the discovery that they are available practically and personally. We each of us need something to make life seem worth while in the face of world-destruction. New habits of personal independence in thinking mean new habits of national

independence. A new self-reliance in matters of mind is one way of service to country, and our souls cry for some means to embody that which has been born within us, our new and passionate patriotism. A constant consciousness of our country as a factor of our individual life is a novel sensation for most of us. Our new patriotism is as humble as it is intense, for Europe has frightened us. Our introspection causes us to turn upon ourselves questions as honest as characterize our scrutiny of Europe. We decry the materialism and militarism that could burn Louvain and bombard Rheims; our culture is different, but is it deeper? Which is more essentially barbarian, to burn another country's libraries, or never to use one's own? For which do we as a nation show more reverence, the acquisition of power, which in our land spells wealth, or the acquisition of learning, which in our land spells poverty? For many an American money-maker is beauty any more its own excuse for being than for a European war-maker? We have battle fields dealing death or crippling wounds not to bodies alone. Cases seem only too sadly authentic in which soldiers have struck off the hands of little children, but how many of our States have brutally rejected bills that would have made the minds of our children safe from the maiming of early labor?

To the supra-mundane observer, which seems more cruel, national or class warfare? Class warfare surely, since the classes have better opportunities for brotherhood, and since class hostility has all the selfishness of the personal without any of the inspiration of the patriotic. While candidly introspective, we may wonder whether plutocracy is any less tyrannous over democratic ideals than is autocracy. Is not our capitalist system founded on the principle that might makes right? We apply the doctrine of expediency and of the survival of the fittest more in private business than in public, but is there any other essential difference between the American type of war and the European?

This self-scrutiny brings us to a deep humility, but it does not bring us to the devastating despair to which the spectacle of an embattled Europe reduces us. Throughout all our adult lives we have been doing business, like the French shopman of today, under the bombardment of evil facts. To become spiritually inert merely because evil facts have assumed an unfamiliar and hideous shape argues, it is true, a proper sensibility and sympathy, but argues also

something of hysteria and affectation. Henceforth we must rise to the requirements of a courage stout enough to meet conditions that can be predicted and conditions impossible to forecast. Some practical effects on American existence are obvious. From generation to generation every department of our life from cabinet to kitchen has been affected by the ceaseless tide of immigration. This influx must cease. There will be boundless opportunity for the European who remains at home. Who will dig our ditches and stoke our furnaces? Manual labor performed by skilled intelligence may acquire a dignity it has never attained; it may also acquire a perilous power. In any event the change implies a socialist readjustment that all thinking people may as well face.

Quite apart from its relation to labor, socialism by virtue of its creed will after this war have incalculable influence because it will preach international peace to a world nauseated with the stench of battle. In spite of the defection of socialism in the present war, we hope better things of it in the future, since it may have learned faith in its theories through the bitter experience of deserting them. While the world continues to wait, as it has been waiting for two thousand years, for the growth of an unselfishness energetic enough to destroy destruction, there are two classes whose self-interest gives the practical-minded more immediate hope: the international financier, who may refuse to waste his money; the international socialist, who may refuse to waste his body.

The effect on immigration and the effect on socialism are only two of the many new conditions to be observed as we regard, still with as much puzzlement as pride, our new supply of patriotism. It is so far a painful possession, very different from our childish thrills on Fourth of July, this new piercing sense of personal responsibility to the world to uphold the flag of American ideals. There is nothing of my-country-right-or-wrong in our watchfulness of our Government's actions. We may wish, with stinging shame before a course that must appear to the world as commercialism when it may perhaps be genuinely parental care for our suffering people, that we had been equally bold in protests for other people's neutrality as for our own, but our criticism of our Government is not superficial and articulate as in many smaller crises. We may envy Germany her deifica-

tion of State and Kaiser, a conception seductively and culpably devoid of individual responsibility, but to democratic common sense a President seems a mere man. To that same democratic common sense he also seems a man doing his noblest to steer our ship of state through a sea made chartless by mines and submarines. The sensations that are vividly novel for most of us are that every hour we feel as if we were pulling an oar, and that no one of us feels covetous of the pilot's seat.

Again, as in our duty to establish an American aesthetic, our attitude to American morality as shown in the public actions of the United States, is a personal responsibility. In the bewildering confusion of national behavior everywhere, one course is clear to every citizen of every land, his own individual allegiance to the ideals he believes his country to represent. For each American it is a duty incalculable and inspiring to uphold by his private and personal conduct the principles of American patriotism: peace and justice, freedom and brotherhood. How profound these principles are is shown by our reaction to the crime of the *Lusitania*. If that horror revealed to us German madness, still more it revealed to us American manliness. Our slowness to revenge stands forth as national honor so high that it perceives that the honor of no nation is so high as the honor of humanity. As we have proved that we can live the creed of America, so, if ever the flames of war reach us, we shall prove that we can die for our faith in peace.

As we continue to give honest account, each of his private soul-changes, we find that nothing has altered more fundamentally than our personal attitude toward war. We have always hated war with our heads, and loved it with our hearts. Now we feel a nauseating abhorrence far more potent than mere acquiescence in argument. Today the sight of khaki brings instantly to my eyes spurting blood, the martial airs I have always loved seem the pipes of death, stirring my soul with unclean emotions. There are, of course, many to gainsay this revulsion with the threadbare arguments for the ennobling heroism of war. I have too much faith in humanity to believe it needs war to make it heroic. War is an inspiration merely because men have not been educated to see that they can serve their country better by living for her than by dying. The emotional uplift of battle does indeed raise men from a material to a spiritual plane,

but it is never the highest spiritual plane, and it is never permanent. The man or nation that needs the red whip of war to sting to sacrifice will suffer afterwards for lack of the goad. It is an honest Englishman who writes, "I've found it harder to go straight in life than to go under fire." While the impulse to spill one's blood in utmost effort is nobler than the impulse to save one's skin, it is primarily a desire for irresponsibility and mob-support. However high humanity may be raised on the tide of war, it is raised far higher by the lonely heroisms of peace, sublime, unapplauded, and without reaction.

This statement is far from opposition to a sane and adequate national defense. So long as the world is the world there will be criminal nations as well as criminal citizens, and both necessitate police protection. Policemen and firemen are as brave as the bravest of soldier lads, but there is an immense difference in our concept of a policeman and a soldier. The policeman exists for safeguarding life, the soldier for destroying it. In the future we shall be no more thrilled by a soldier's uniform than by a policeman's, which last suggests a comfortable sense of protection, and an equally uncomfortable sense of patrol wagons and prisons. The conception of the glory of war has passed forever from the content of our daily thinking.

In our inventory we must all reckon henceforth with a change in the status of woman. We are still arguing the question here, blind to the fact that in Europe it has already passed from argument to experiment, and to experiment that is not temporary, since the terrible ranks of dead, wounded, and missing can never be refilled. The curious aspect of the case is that the work of men will fall to the hands of exactly those women who have never asked for it, those classes who would infinitely prefer to remain comfortable, old-fashioned wives and mothers. It is as if Heaven granted the demand of women for equality, but ironically reserved the choice of which women. They are to be women as little tainted by the superficialities of fashionable society as by the subtleties of university education. Further, they enter upon their test under the most favorable conditions for proving their fibre, pitifully enough, as women purged of all pettiness, tragic with suffering, but brave with an unbearable bravery.

As we strive for a permanent ability to recognize in the

soul-shaking conditions of a world under reconstruction the seething of a marvellous, resistless leaven, we discover that most of us have already won an adjustment incredible a year ago. Poise has succeeded paralysis. The simplest man among us grows in soul-stature as he perceives his high duty, not alone to country, but to the world. In some powerful subconscious fashion we have come to feel that each normal-going individual adds to the sum total of sanity that alone can save this rocking universe. Nothing before this war ever brought so sharply to our consciousness the dignity of dailiness. The humblest deeds of the humblest people startle one with their intrinsic beauty when one contrasts them with days spent in murder. Lifted out of its dullness the normal shines in sudden sublimity, like the picture of a family breakfast table, warm and merry with affection, seen against a burning background of pillage and rapine.

Not alone by contrast with a flame-swept Europe do we seek to taste in each fleet hour our present security, but by contrast with our own possible future. Never do we veil our vision from the fact that our own homes may tomorrow be paying their terrible tribute to the war-madness of the world. Surely of all possessions that shall give us strength both against the insidious perils of peace and the brutal perils of war, not least shall be the power to do the dullest deeds with a singing soul. This ability, for which in the last year we have paid heavy price, is a vital asset for all the future, since experience has proved to us that the simple doing of our accustomed round can be sanctified to high protest, personal and constant, against violence and blood-thirst.

Another possession that both publicly and privately we have saved from the gun-fire is our humor. There is nothing we could more worthily keep watch and ward of for the world. If one cure for war lies in incorporating into one's personal daily life the qualities most opposed to the sins of the nations, we may surely appreciate the power of pure fun. We observe whole countries desolated through lack of humor, lack of perception of their own incongruities, lack of understanding of other people's peculiarities. These sins against sanity bring colossal retribution. It is only superficially flippant to question how far history would have been different if William Hohenzollern had possessed a sense of humor. The query serves at least to convince us of the need of keeping a large stock of fun on our souls' shelves, for hu-

mor provides the sanity and the grace of life, and is as greatly germicidal and as little fratricidal as that sun a share in whose salubrity some people have thought worth killing millions of their brothers to obtain.

As we continue to check off our resources for courage, we find sky and wind and air no mean possessions. From my window a vistaed battalion of beauty challenges, O you of little faith and less logic, whether it is easier to explain a mountain or a murder? Dullards of despair, while all the time is spread above our heads a blue banner of majesty whereon sun and moon and stars have woven a handwriting divinely hopeful! We are stupid never to learn the alphabet of the sky. War has done us service if our shuddering gaze has been forced from a crimsoned earth to a clear spread heaven. The blood of battle fields is rebuked by the calm beauty of every dawn recurring in exhaustless forgiveness. Even over Belgium the stars are shining, annulling by their eternal loveliness all petty human pain.

As we look with new intensity to a kind and constant nature to reimburse us for our loss of faith in men, so by the destruction of so much of the material stock-in-trade of civilization, we are thrown back, as never before in our lives, upon the possibilities of spirit. The loss of works of art has the shock of a personal blow, but after all, works of art are but symbols: it is spirit that is the substance. The transmission of crystallized achievement is not so important as the transmission of the artist-spirit which shall be nerved to fresh achievement as much by the example of heroic soul as of heroic monument. Rheims ruined may touch the world's thoughts more vitally than Rheims intact. Children of to-day may learn new reverence for art from the very intensity of protest against vandalism with which the air about them is vibrant. Cast violently from comfort in the customary, we have been set throbbing by a sense of new possibilities in our grapple with spiritual problems.

Awed as never before, we find that no battle flame has burned out God. Our stock of faith has proved indestructible both for ourselves and for our country, for what humblest newspaper has hesitated to found its peace-arguments upon the Galilean Gospel? Christianity is the last thing we should lose faith in, for the simple reason that we never have had faith in it. We have granted that Christian principles may be practiced by the individual, but how many of us have

ever honestly believed those principles could be practically applied to the conduct of business, government, or international relations? At the same time few of us could deny that Christianity has molded the noblest individuals of our acquaintance. Suddenly Christianity looms before the world as possibly practical for public application. Never having been tested, it remains its best argument. What stronger logic for the Christ experiment than the devastation of the world without it? Much is being written nowadays to prove that Christianity sanctions war. To some of us such pleas are a burning blasphemy. To all such arguments one may oppose one question: Which of us can picture the Jesus of history plunging a bayonet into any man's flesh, or touching the fuse that shall spatter the grass with the warm red blood of boys?

The heaviest fact that the resources of our faith must meet is that whichever side wins, War wins! Surely the conviction farthest from the action of any nation, belligerent or neutral, is the conviction of the practical application of Christianity to public issues. In these bewildering days we can assert our principles only privately and personally. Only as individuals can we serve our country, only as individuals can we serve the world, and only as individuals can we serve our God. It is incumbent upon us as private citizens so to live as to assert our faith in peace, and in the example of One who died to prove His faith in it. Battles may crash and roar about our heads, but we stand, we toil,—serene, high-cheerful, for our inventory reveals to us that we possess, unto death and after, a supply of inexhaustible ideals, since we believe, indeed, in the survival of the fittest, though our ideal of the fittest is a Christ, not a Krupp gun.

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